

## What is FASD?

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) is a set of **physical and mental birth defects** that result when a woman drinks alcohol during her pregnancy. When a pregnant woman drinks beer, wine, or mixed drinks, so does her baby. Alcohol passes through the placenta right into the developing baby. The baby may suffer lifelong damage as a result. FASD is the number one cause of birth defects in the United States and is **100% preventable**.

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### More:

**FASD covers other terms such as:**

- Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) the only diagnosis given by doctors. FAS is characterized by brain damage, facial deformities, and growth deficits. Heart, liver, and kidney defects also are common, as well as vision and hearing problems. Individuals with FAS have difficulties with learning, attention, memory, and problem solving.
- Alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorder (ARND) - reserved for individuals with functional or cognitive impairments linked to prenatal alcohol exposure, including decreased head size at birth, structural brain abnormalities, and a pattern of behavioral and mental abnormalities
- Alcohol-related birth defects (ARBD) - describes the physical defects linked to prenatal alcohol exposure, including heart, skeletal, kidney, ear, and eye malformations
- Fetal alcohol effects (FAE) - a term that has been popularly used to describe alcohol-exposed individuals whose condition does not meet the full criteria for an FAS diagnosis

## Statistics and Facts about FAS and FASD

- FASD is the leading known preventable cause of mental retardation and birth defects.
- FASD affects 1 in 100 live births or as many as 40,000 infants each year.
- An individual with fetal alcohol syndrome can incur a lifetime health cost of over \$800,000.
- In 2003, fetal alcohol syndrome cost the United States \$5.4 billion - direct costs were \$3.9 billion, while indirect costs added another \$1.5 billion.
- Children do not outgrow FASD. The physical and behavioral problems last a lifetime.
- FAS and FASD are found in all racial and socio-economic groups.
- FAS and FASD are not genetic disorders. Women with FAS or affected by FASD have healthy babies if they do not drink alcohol during their pregnancy.